



F. Post  
1/21/75

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### The CIA and citizen gossips

By TOM TIEDE

WASHINGTON — (NEA) — During the latter part of the 1960s, when a worried Lyndon Johnson was enlisting the aid of the FBI and CIA to probe domestic anti-establishment thought, I wrote a story that caught the eyes of the on-highs.

The article concerned the American Nazi Party. In it I told of the kinds of citizens attracted to the party, and mentioned casually of meeting two young graduates of The Citadel who were touring and complimenting the ANP headquarters.

Shortly after publication, I received a call from a chap identifying himself as an agent for the Army's Criminal Investigations Division (CID), who wanted to know more about The Citadel soldiers. I said any more than had been published was privileged information, that I was surprised he'd think otherwise, but he persevered. We agreed to meet in a motel near the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, in a few days.

Before the meeting, I called the CID to verify the investigator's credentials. As I suspected, nobody by the name given was on the rolls. He wouldn't be FBI, said an Army friend, because they glory in proper identification; "He's probably CIA — they hide behind many badges."

I agreed he was CIA. Even back then, the agency's "Domestic Contact Service" was an ill-kept secret. I was younger, less experienced, but not completely simple. When the agent arrived in my room, he said the "Army" was interested in finding The Citadel soldiers because "we don't think they should be messing around with Nazis." He had a Citadel yearbook and asked if I would select the proper photos.

Well, had it been Ulysses Grant, not some bumbly spook, asking for such patriotism, I'd have declined. My job as a journalist is to observe, not to spy. As I recall I looked over the yearbook, gave descriptions of the soldiers entirely different from actuality, and concluded I could not associate any of the pictures with the culprits.

The memory of that occasion returns now, with new charges of CIA domestic surveillance, because I think I did right in brushing off the agent and because

there may be a greater lesson in the morality. If the charges of widespread intra-national CIA spying are true, it must be assumed they have been aided and abetted by citizens such as you and I. More than assumption, actually, it is a fact the CIA, with some 12 to 15 domestic bureaus, relies on ordinary citizens for some intelligence information. Mostly, the old Domestic Contact Service (now called "Foreign Resources") asked citizens going abroad to keep their eyes and ears open. Supposedly, though — witness the recent revelations — the agency has its at-home finks as well.

No doubt the agents acquire some informers by offering cash or the rhetoric of national duty. Others perhaps do not have to be coaxed at all, since Americans have a disturbing proclivity to gossip; many agencies besides the CIA have found that community waggles are all too cooperative, if not always accurate, and woe betide the fellow who applies for a security job who has pinched a neighbor's wife or neglected to return a borrowed mower until after the first snow.

The truth of the matter, then, is far more important than whether the CIA committed illegalities; it's whether Americans will become disgusted enough with such dangers to do something about it themselves: mainly, shut up. Doubtless thousands of Americans, myself included I suppose, have had the opportunity to blow the whistle on domestic CIA snoops. We haven't, to now, to our shame. Perhaps the present controversy will convince us otherwise in the future.

This isn't to say that the CIA should expect no citizen aid. I recall another personal experience when I was inexplicably detained (45 minutes) by Communist police at an East Berlin railroad exit, and later questioned about it by the CIA. Had I had any good information then, I would have divulged it — if only to help save others from similar detentions. My belief is that this kind of cooperation is humanistic and proper; but there can be no overriding reason why any of us should be talked into, or bought into, blabbing on one another.